

Finally, I was extremely disappointed with the Committee's endorsement of Assembly Bill 2217 (Strom-Martin). That bill essentially enacted this recommendation by establishing a commission to estimate how much money is needed to deliver a quality education. However, this bill does not promote a thorough dialogue. Instead, it guarantees that the minority party's opinion on what constitutes adequate funding will be completely stifled. Seven members of CQEC would be appointed by the Governor, two by Senate Rules, two by the Speaker of the Assembly, and two by the Senate of Public Instruction. Given the composition of state government, it is likely that Commission appointments would be limited to a single party, ultimately resulting in a partisan analysis of how much money schools need to educate children. Republicans promoted a fair alternative, suggesting that the minority party make four of the thirteen appointments. However, this approach was summarily rejected. The Commission needs to be more balanced, and after seeing the direction the Legislature has taken, I cannot support this model.

Local Revenue Enhancement

I also have a problem with the local revenue component advocated by the Master Plan. If we reverted back to local property taxes as a means of revenue, we may ultimately have the same funding inequities that spurred the *Serrano v. Priest* decision. Once again, wealthier regions would enjoy greater levels of education funding, as the communities who could most afford to pay higher property taxes would be more inclined to take advantage of this option. Moreover, given disparities in property values, even if similar taxes were levied in a wealthy and poor community, the wealthier community will net a disproportionately higher level of tax dollars. Because of the *Serrano* decision, such a result would be unacceptable.

The Master Plan tries to get around this problem by promoting an equalization scheme. However, if the state provided equalization dollars for those districts that did not or could not raise taxes to the same degree as other districts, the state would create a perverse incentive structure where no community would be uniquely motivated to raise taxes. Instead, districts might just wait for other districts to raise taxes, and then would capture the benefit in state equalization dollars. Funding for richer regions will surpass funding for poorer areas, and then the state will have to spend millions to level-up funding for poorer schools to address the new inequities. This brings us right back to the status quo.

I think that it is also worth noting that during fiscal crises, the state has historically exploited alternative revenue sources for schools in order to offset its responsibility. Instead of serving as a means to supplement state funding, local revenue sources may end up supplanting state funding. Revenue generated from local taxes may provide another excuse for the state to avoid its obligations to our schools.

Universal Preschool / Health Services Delivery

I am very concerned with the substantial emphasis of Universal Preschool and early childhood development as a solution to our educational ills. Indeed, it is important for young children to be healthy and engage in activities that promote physical, social, and intellectual development. However, I believe that families, not the state, should be responsible for the earliest phases of childhood development and health. There are several reasons why I feel that it is inadvisable to shift parental responsibility to a system that is ill-equipped to handle such duties.